# REVIEWS

THE RADICAL PAPERS—ESSAYS IN DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM. Edited, with introduction, by *Irving Howe*. New York: Doubleday & Co., 1966.

There is a certain irony in the fact that I, a Communist spokesman, have been asked to review this book, a collection of papers by a group of "democratic socialists" from whom Communists have been purposefully excluded. Perhaps this choice of a reviewer is only an expression of mischievousness on the part of the editors of the *Yale Law Journal*. Since I am an incurable optimist, I prefer to hope that it is a recognition of the fact that an exchange of radical ideas which does not include Communists is necessarily incomplete.

It is not an easy matter to review a collection of this kind, particularly when its editor disavows any effort to establish a political or intellectual "line." Its purpose—and it is an admirable one—is "to stir people to thought, to controversy, and to action." The essays, editor Irving Howe says, are the work, in the main, of a fairly close-knit group of fierce individualists who have a certain community of experience and opinion. At least half of the contributors "form a community of friends who for more than a decade have been engaged in political-intellectual collaboration around the quarterly *Dissent*." Throughout the collection the work of the individual contributors interacts with the viewpoints and themes of the group as a whole. A particularly striking difference emerges between the contributors who are primarily teachers and writers on social problems and the much smaller number of contributors who are now, or have been in the past, directly involved in one or another of the organized movements that make up the contemporary American left.

The book is divided into three sections: The Socialist Background; Perspectives on Modern Society; and The Problems of Radical Politics. The bulk of the material is focused on the problems of domestic society, in an attempt "to enter a dialogue with larger sections of the intellectual community concerning the future of American social life." This emphasis flows from an estimation that "any expectation . . . of reconstructing a new socialist ideology was certainly premature, perhaps a fantasy." Rather, there is the need "to work piecemeal, to

treat socialist thought as inherently problematic, and to move pragmatically and experimentally from question to question—with general theories or notions . . . but without a total, ready-made, world-encompassing ideology."

The first section (The Socialist Background) attempts "to project an image of a fraternal society in which men planned and controlled their political and economic affairs in terms of democratic participation and in which no small group of owners, managers, or party bosses could dominate the lives of millions." The opening article, "Images of Socialism," by Lewis Coser and Irving Howe, reviews the "pre-Marxist utopias" and describes the significant contribution made by Marx who "placed the drive toward utopia not beyond but squarely—perhaps a little too squarely—within the course of history," who "saw the possibility of linking the utopian desire with the actual development of social life," thus giving "new power to the revolt against history by locating it, 'scientifically,' within history."

For centuries past, men have dreamed of an ideal society, and many scintillating models have been lovingly worked out and described in great books which are among the treasures of the world's literature. The constructors of these utopias believed that they could be achieved by an effort of will on the part of enlightened leaders. All that was necessary was to convince an elite—whether it be composed of philosophers, statemen, or forward-looking businessmen—that the utopia was desirable. If Joshua could make the sun stand still in the heavens, the Utopians could say, "Stop the world! We want to get off." Marx, on the other hand, realized that the societies that men create rest upon an economic base which shapes its institutions, its laws and its beliefs. The change from one social formation to another occurs only when the objective, material basis for such a change has developed; that is, when the economic forces that have been developed by the social relationships of a given society can no longer be contained within those social relationships. Each form of society, in the course of its operation, produces both the material basis for its change and the human forces which will accomplish it. For instance, the merchants and the skilled craftsmen, freed from their ties to the land, and concentrated in the feudal cities, provided the leadership for the peasant masses who put an end to feudalism; these same merchants and skilled craftsmen provided the nucleus for the ruling class of capitalism.

Coser and Howe argue that as the movement for socialism grew, "the image of socialism kept becoming hazier and hazier." Their article urges the necessity of asserting that utopian image as one of social

striving, tension, conflict; an image of a problem-creating and problem-solving society. . . . [T]o will the image of socialism is a constant struggle for definition, almost an act of pain. But it is the kind of pain that makes creation possible."

It seems to me that this section fails in its objective of image making for the very curious reason that these socialists who call themselves pragmatic refuse to admit that socialism is a reality in a large section of the world. It is no longer possible to construct utopias, to "will the image of socialism" because socialist reality, such as it is, with its enormous accomplishments and its considerable defects, exists, independent of our will. What needs to be projected is how socialism will develop in the United States. It will be a very different development, not only because of the vastly different circumstances and traditions in our country, but also because we have the great advantage of being able to learn from our predecessors on the road to socialism. It is ironic that at a time when the Communist movement in every country is concerning itself with the national path to socialism (a phenomenon that is given negativistic, almost snide recognition in Coser's essay on "The Breakup of the Soviet Camp") the "democratic socialists," who reproach Communists for dogmatism, cling to their dogmas vis-à-vis the socialist world.

There are some outstanding articles in the second section on contemporary American problems. I would single out Harvey Swados' contribution, "The U.A.W.: Over the Top or Over the Hill?," Michael Harrington's "The Politics of Poverty," and Tom Kahn's "Problems of the Negro Movement." The hallmark of these articles is their concreteness; they are stamped with reality. Many of the other articles make a valuable critique of our society; some deal with aspects of our economic and political functioning that are too often neglected (*vide*, "Reconstructuring the Corporate System," by Michael Reagan). But others seem like metaphysical constructs. Can we honestly say (as does Daniel M. Friedenberg in "A Fabian Program for America") that, "The first step toward [the development of a sense of benevolence as the contrary of hostility] can already be seen in big cities where tolerance, the initial or passive form of benevolence, has been created by the needs of vast numbers of persons of different origins to work together?" How many working educators will agree with Christopher Jencks' thesis (in "The Future of American Education," an article which is otherwise a very perceptive analysis of its subject) that in colleges and universities, "the educators have more and more control both over their own affairs and over their students." When he says

that in the struggle for "academic Freedom," "the pattern is one in which the 'liberals' support professional autonomy while the 'conservatives' argue for the layman's right to decide what goes on in a school or college," and sooner or later victory in such struggles usually goes to the liberals—does this have the ring of reality to our ears?

The most serious weakness in this section—a weakness which in many instances helps to create this metaphysical aura—is the separation and isolation of domestic problems from questions of foreign policy. In his Introduction, Irving Howe refers the reader to *Dissent* magazine for criticism of "the failures, stupidities and reactionary direction of U.S. foreign policy in both Vietnam and the Dominican Republic." He explains that "it has proven impossible to deal with these matters in *The Radical Papers*—a book we see as relevant not merely to the immediate moment but to the next decade of American social and political life."

Can a serious critic of American life really believe that "the failures, stupidities and reactionary direction of U.S. foreign policy" are relevant "merely to the immediate moment"?

The criticism of domestic problems becomes less relevant when domestic problems are isolated from questions of foreign policy. Foreign policy cannot be "quarantined." A reactionary foreign policy will inevitably contract the boundaries of domestic progress. The relationship of radicals to the welfare state—one of the main themes of the book—becomes sadly distorted unless one takes into account the effect of skyrocketing arms expenditures. The relationship is much more than the "cash nexus"—consider the effect of systematic slaughter abroad upon social morality and motivation at home.

But the fundamental question—a question which at least should be posed in a book which calls itself *The Radical Papers*—is what in the nature of our society produces such an abysmally reactionary foreign policy? Is this not related to the very structure of the society and all its evils of mass poverty, unemployment, racism, alienation? Schrecker and Walzer, in their essay, "American Intervention and the Cold War," do not even consider this question. They picture our foreign policy primarily as an aberration of ideology, rather than an outgrowth from the socio-economic roots of our society. The Draft Program of the Communist Party, in one of many passages dealing with the relationship of foreign policy to the structure of American society, puts it this way:

> Politics do not cease at the water's edge for the big corporations because economics do not cease there. From the oil wells of

> Arabia to the copper mines of Chile, U.S. corporate investment abroad has mushroomed since World War II. The uranium of the Congo, the tin and tungsten of Southeast Asia, and many more of the world's resources beckon as they slip or threaten to slip from the hands of the old colonial powers. The lure of such riches beyond the water's edge is, in itself, sufficient incentive for monopoly to shape U.S. foreign policy as its instrument for thwarting the revolutions that seek to make the resources of the colonial lands the property of the people who inhabit them. And the fundamental urge to preserve the profit system spurs monopoly to shape foreign policy as a weapon against the socialist challenge and as the instrument for world domination.[1]

Joseph Alsop, an anti-Communist, and no radical, explained it this way, in commenting on an expected British request "that we shoulder a considerable share of the defense and strategic burden that Britain has thus far carried in the vast area extending from Aden to Borneo,"

> If the new arrangements are accepted, it will be up to us to help the British in any way we can if Britain's *crucial rubber and other investments in Malaya are threatened, or if the even more crucial Middle Eastern oil investments are attacked, or if* trouble menaces the raw material investments in East and Central Africa.[2]

You notice that the words "freedom and democracy" are *not* present in this statement.

These two quotations, from such widely divergent sources, partially define *imperialism*, a word which is apparently not in the vocabulary of the contributors to *The Radical Papers.*

The third section of the book (The Problems of Radical Politics) contains articles on strategy of radical protest and political action, including pieces by Bayard Rustin and Tom Hayden. This is the most exciting section of the entire book, because it is a direct debate on a desperately crucial problem for the radical movement today. Yet it is a curiously unsatisfying debate, for neither side seems to listen to the arguments of the other. Each side grasps a different segment of reality and fails or refuses to recognize that the segment grasped by the other is also real.

What is missing is a sober assessment of the ultra-Right and its constantly increasing strength. The Birchers and all their kissin' cousins ("I'm not a member, but some of the finest Americans I know are" is not only Goldwater's chant—it is echoed by many prominent

1. COMMUNIST PARTY U.S.A., NEW PROGRAM OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY U.S.A. 28 (1966).
2. Los Angeles Times, May 7, 1965. (Emphasis added.)

personalities) are being nurtured by a foreign policy which deliberately conjures up an "international Communist conspiracy" for its rationale. But the ultra-Right, apparently wiser than the editor of *The Radical Papers*, has not divorced domestic and foreign policy. Its domestic strategy is based on combining anti-Communism with bigotry. Playing upon the fears aroused by the specter of Communism and the Negro people's demand for equality, it is massing together all the retrogressive elements in American society. This strategy is not confined to the South, where the ultra-Right merges with the rabid segregationists. Californians can testify that both subtle and overt calls to bigotry are a major rallying cry to consolidate the ultra-Right. The passage of Proposition 14 (to repeal all Fair Housing laws and prevent such legislation in the future), the unexpectedly large vote of Sam Yorty, mayor of Los Angeles, in the 1966 Democratic gubernatorial primary, and the Republican nomination of Ronald Reagan, are not separate, isolated phenomena. Yorty, for instance, combined a call for using nuclear tactical weapons in Vietnam with a sly appeal to bigotry, particularly emphasized after the Watts uprising.

The central fact that must be recognized in any discussion of political tactics today is that Goldwater's nomination in 1964 pushed all politics to the right. Again, California provides an illustration. For two terms, Governor Pat Brown has projected a liberal program. But his actions since 1964 have been in dramatic contrast to his own past. He campaigned successfully to remove Si Casady (because of Casady's opposition to the war in Vietnam) from the leadership of the California Democratic Council, the state-wide grass-roots Democratic organization. He supported the passage by the State Legislature of Yorty's "anti-riot" bill, a bill which answers the frustrations of the Negro people by increasing police power against them. He is retreating before the pressures and strength of the ultra-Right.

It is not enough, however, to recognize that "liberals" are being pushed to the right. As "democratic socialists" search for program and tactics that will bring about a new political alignment, dedicated to "radical policies" to meet "radical problems," it is suicidal to ignore the fact that the ultra-Right is also working for a political realignment on its terms, based upon the appeal to hysterical anti-Communism and to the "white backlash." Hitler based himself upon the same frightening combination—ruthless aggression abroad against the "international Jewish bolshevik conspiracy" and brutal exploitation of anti-Semitism at home.

Rustin, Geltman and Plastrik fail to grasp the first segment of this reality; Hayden fails to grasp the second.

Any collection of essays—and particularly one edited by someone as able as Irving Howe—is more than the sum of its parts. Anyone who reads the book thoughtfully can find his own particular theme. For me, the most provocative article, because it sums up the dilemma posed by this book, was the one entitled "Marxism: Criticism and/or Action?" by Harold Rosenberg.

Rosenberg sees Marx's basic theories in terms of a unity between criticism and action. He summarizes this thought at one point: "At the heart of Marxism is its contention that its criticism and the revolutionary action of the working class have the identical objective, revolution by the second being the material equivalent of the first, and supplying its positive social content." And again: "Materialist criticism is the revolutionary action of the individual; revolutionary activity is the materialist criticism of the working class." However, says Rosenberg, doubt regarding the capacity of the proletariat and its destiny, has split the functions of Marxism as criticism and as action, which now conflict with each other. Rosenberg sees the organization of a Marxist party as the expression of this conflict: "But no sooner does Marxism itself turn into an ideology uniting the actions of individuals than it abandons its critical position and with it its dialectical relation to social transformation." He concludes that all that remains valid today of Marxism is its negative aspect, its criticism, a conceptual foothold if an inadequate one. Given a proletarian void, Marxism's proletarian solution has become a mirage.

Rosenberg's statement that when "Marxism itself turns into an ideology uniting the actions of individuals . . . it abandons its critical position and with it its dialectical relation to social transformation" illuminates the basic difference between Communists and the intellectuals who call themselves "democratic socialists." Can there be action—the very action which this book hopes to stimulate—without "an ideology uniting the actions of individuals?" Rosenberg argues for a celibate criticism that must not become a fructifying ideology which might give birth to action. But this supposed non-ideology is, in fact, a most subtle and sophisticated ideology, an ideology that serves the *status quo* because although it might lead to modifications of the *status quo* (an attainable end of criticism), a revolutionary transformation can only be achieved through action.

There cannot be an end to ideology; there can only be the choice

of ideology. Every individual, every organization, every movement has an ideology, whether it is recognized or not. For most people, their ideology is something *received* unconsciously from their society, with perhaps a few tucks to make the hand-me-down garment fit a little better. The individual or the movement with such an ideology is just as much (if not more) its prisoner as the individual or movement which has permitted a consciously chosen ideology to freeze into dogma. Schrecker and Walzer illustrate this. They attempt to destroy the myths of the cold war, yet they themselves are still so permeated by the anti-Communism on which those myths are based that in the very process of exposing them, they justify them.

One can conclude from Rosenberg's article that the real evil arises when people organize together around an ideology:

> The Party as the association of Marxian professionals stands as an independent power over and against both the class of laborers and its own individual members. The discontinuity of the proletariat, its rise from and relapse into nothingness, which is the pathetic basis of its experience of itself, as well as the impetus of its future freedom, is attacked by the whip of the Party leaders, for whom revolutionary politics exist as a thing.

The proletariat has ceased to be a revolutionary force. The Party becomes an elite, opposed to an apathetic mass of workers; it thus reverts to the sterile concepts of the pre-Marxist utopians, and negates the great contribution of Marx (as described by Coser and Howe in "Images of Socialism") in placing "the drive toward utopia not beyond but squarely . . . within the course of history."

This line of argumentation exposes what may perhaps be the most fundamental division between a group such as the contributors to this collection of essays, a group which has a great deal of difficulty in describing itself except in such all-things-to-all-men terms as "democratic Socialists," and Marxists who see the necessity of a total, world-encompassing ideology and an organization around it. The need for organization cannot be denied by criticisms however justified of the sins and mistakes of a particular organization. I suggest that many of the most thoughtful, most dedicated, most creative forces of the "new Left" are today looking for an *advanced* organization just as they are groping for a total ideology. The inspired spontaneous upsurge of the Negro people and the young is beginning to experience some of the frustration that comes from the lack of a deliberately chosen ideology and the lack of an organization. The articles written by young people active in the "new Left," reject the rigid, exclusionary policy toward

the Communists that permeates most of the other articles in this collection. Marx's dialectical unity of criticism and action was not only valid historically; it is valid today and perhaps more so during an ebb in the organized movement of the working class. This unity is necessary if there are to be receptive ears for the radicals' criticism. As Harvey Swados points out, in his essay on the U.A.W.:

> It is when people are in motion, and are led toward an ethical goal, that they are most receptive to challenges to received wisdom; more than that, they themselves become innovators, and discover that they are capable of an inventiveness and an intellectual audacity of which they themselves could scarcely conceive in less adventurous times.

Schrecker and Walzer, in "American Intervention and the Cold War," state that "The main problem with American foreign policy today is that the basic perception which guides our actions, the Cold War with communism, is no longer either realistic or appropriate." Lewis Coser, in "The Breakup of the Soviet Camp" suggests that, in the face of the Soviet phenomenon, radicals "have been prone until very recently to accept the static assumptions of the academic and diplomatic Establishment." Some conclusions might be drawn as to relations between Communists and non-Communists from the recognition of the issue on an international basis. The same article by Lewis Coser concludes by saying:

> There is now a chance for the socialist left, about to be relieved from the communist incubus which fatally hampered its movements for two generations, to embark anew on its effort to build a more democratic and fraternal society upon the foundations the welfare state has provided. . . . As the heavy mortgage of communism is about to be lifted, new failures can no longer be attributed to the impact of world commnunism.

May I suggest that it is time for the "socialist left" to examine whether on the domestic field it has not also been prone to "accept the static assumptions of the . . . Establishment"—in this case, the police establishment, whether represented by the FBI, McCarthy, HUAC, or the McCarran Act. Just as the Communists, over the past several years and more intensely in their recently concluded National Convention, are examining their mistakes, it is time for the "socialist left" to examine honestly and objectively whether its failures can be attributed to the "heavy mortgage of communism." Such an examination might lead to the conclusion that the "sophisticated" anti-communism with which it is currently preoccupied helps to limit the

emergence of a strong Left in our country. And without such a Left, based on a passionate hatred of the social and economic conditions which feed poverty, bigotry and war, the vision of a new society expressed in *The Radical Papers* cannot be fulfilled.

DOROTHY HEALEY†

THE CITY IS THE FRONTIER. By *Charles Abrams*. New York: Harper & Row, 1965. Pp. xii, 394.

There is no royal road to urban salvation. The ills of the city are many and varied, as diverse as their causes, and their cures. Cities suffer from slums, rats, dirt, disease and crime; from racial and class divisions; from overcrowded, inferior and segregated schools; from discrimination in housing and employment; from traffic congestion, air pollution, despoliation of parks; from dullness, ugliness, planlessness, sprawl; from financial crises, dwindling tax bases, loss of industry, the flight to the suburbs, the hard residue of poverty. We have not really met these problems. The rapidity of the urban revolution has overwhelmed us; we have not acknowledged its scope or its implications.[1] We have neither fixed responsibility nor conferred power where it is needed. We deny our local governments self-rule (and their jurisdictions overlap); state legislatures are largely anti-urban (despite the reapportionment decisions); we are afraid of our federal government and will not let it act directly (although we use some of its money); we retain a stubborn faith that free enterprise will furnish automatic solutions.[2] The only governmental device we tolerate to any substantial degree is urban renewal.[3] That is not enough.

† Spokesman for the Communist Party, Southern California.

1. We may begin to move in this direction, however. As this is written (July 15, 1966), the Illinois National Guard is moving into Chicago's most depressed Negro ghetto to quell rioting and looting. Similar disturbances are occurring in Cleveland, New York and Jacksonville.

2. See ANDERSON, THE FEDERAL BULLDOZER (1964).

3. "Urban renewal" is seldom used today in its broad dictionary sense. The words usually import a contemporary device for remaking slum areas or restoring older sections that are deteriorating. A "local public agency" (usually a city) prepares a renewal plan providing for acquisition and clearance of some or all of the area; the cleared land is sold at vacant land prices to private redevelopers, or public or private institutions (or on occasion even to other governmental bodies such as school boards or public housing authorities); the federal government meets two-thirds (in some instances three-fourths)